PROMOTING THE KIDSWALK-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAM THROUGH POLICIES

Walking and bicycling issues have grown in significance throughout the 1990s, and now public agencies and public interest groups are striving to define appropriate ways to accommodate walking and bicycling within the overall transportation system. The goal is for many more of us to walk and bicycle and to be able to do so safely, conveniently, and comfortably across the whole community.

Public support and advocacy for improved conditions for walking and bicycling has created widespread acceptance that more should be done to enhance the safety, comfort, and convenience of the nonmotorized traveler. Opinion surveys throughout the 1990s have demonstrated strong public support for increased planning, funding, and implementation of shared use paths, sidewalks, and on-street facilities.

During the 1990s, Congress supported a movement towards a transportation system that is somewhat more friendly to people with passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (1991) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998). Walking and bicycling have emerged as indicators for the health and well-being of a community. People want to live and work in places where they can safely and conveniently walk and/or bicycle. Worsening traffic congestion, road rage, and the fight for a parking space are helping fuel our interest in pedestrian-friendly environments.

Policy Statement

The United States Department of Transportation encourages states, local governments, professional associations, other government agencies, and community organizations to adopt this policy statement as an indication of their commitment to accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians as an integral element of the transportation system.

1. Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in new construction and reconstruction projects in all urbanized areas unless one or more of three conditions are met:
    - Bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway. In this instance, a greater effort may be necessary to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians elsewhere within the right of way or within the same transportation corridor.
    - The cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding 20 percent of the cost of the larger transportation project.
    - Where sparsity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need. For example, the Portland Pedestrian Guide requires all construction of new public streets to include sidewalk improvements on both sides, unless the street is a cul-de-sac with four or fewer dwellings, or the street has severe topographic or natural resource constraints.
2. In rural areas, paved shoulders should be included in all new construction and reconstruction projects on roadways used by more than 1,000 vehicles per day, as in states such as Wisconsin. Paved shoulders have safety and operational advantages for all road users in addition to providing a place for bicyclists and pedestrians to operate.

Rumble strips are not recommended where shoulders are used by bicyclists unless there is a minimum clear path of four feet in which a bicycle may safely operate.

3. Sidewalks, shared use paths, street crossings (including overcrossings and undercrossings), pedestrian signals, signs, street furniture (such as benches), transit stops and facilities, and all connecting pathways shall be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so that all pedestrians, including people with disabilities, can travel safely and independently.
4. The design and development of the transportation infrastructure shall improve conditions for bicycling and walking through the following additional steps:
   - Planning projects for the long-term. Transportation facilities are long-term investments that remain in place for many years. The design and construction of new facilities that meet the criteria in item 1 shall anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements. For example, a bridge that is likely to remain in place for 50 years might be built with sufficient width for safe bicycle and pedestrian use in anticipation that facilities will be available at either end of the bridge even if that is not currently the case.
   - Addressing the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross corridors as well as travel along them. Even where bicyclists and pedestrians may not commonly use a particular travel corridor that is being improved or constructed, they will likely need to be able to cross that corridor safely and conveniently. Therefore, the design of intersections and interchanges shall accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in a manner that is safe, accessible, and convenient.
   - Getting exceptions approved at a senior level. Exceptions for the noninclusion of bikeways and walkways shall be approved by a senior manager and be documented with supporting data that indicates the basis for the decision.
   - Designing facilities to the best currently available standards and guidelines. The design of facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians should follow design guidelines and standards that are commonly used, such as the AASHTO *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, AASHTO's *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets,* and the ITE *Recommended Practice Design and Safety of Pedestrian Facilities.*

For more information read *Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach* and *A US DOT Policy Statement on Integrating Bicycling and Walking into Transportation Infrastructure* at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/design.htm.